



Comment Period-Hearing Notice

Proposed Rule for the Columbia River Mainstem Water Management Program

**Comment Period Ends
March 4, 2005**

HEARINGS

Vancouver

Feb. 7, 7:00 p.m.
Water Resources Ed. Center
4600 S.E. Columbia Way

Pasco

Feb. 8, 7:00 p.m.
TRAC
Sports Hall of Fame Room
6600 Burden Blvd.

Moses Lake

Feb. 9, 12:00 noon
Fire Dept. Multi-Purpose Rm.
701 E. Third Ave.

Grand Coulee

Feb. 9, 7:00 p.m.
Grand Gallery Theater
204 Main St.

Wenatchee

Feb. 10, 7:00 p.m.
Chelan Co. PUD Auditorium
327 N. Wenatchee Ave.

Lacey

Feb. 15, 7:00 p.m.
Dept. of Ecology Auditorium
300 Desmond Dr.

Colville

Feb. 17, 7:00 p.m.
Community Colleges of
Spokane, Colville Center
985 S. Elm St.
East Entrance, Dominion Rm.

For more information or to send comments

Dept. of Ecology
Attn: Gerry O'Keefe
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504
Fax: 360-407-6989
Email: CRI@ecy.wa.gov
Phone: 360-407-6640

Comment Online:

www.ecy.wa.gov

Click on Quick Links (index
bar on left) and go to
Columbia River Initiative

Copies? See page 2.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) will hold seven public hearings on the proposed draft rule, Chapter 173-565 WAC — Columbia River Mainstem Water Management Program and the draft environmental impact statement (EIS). During the hearings, staff will explain the draft rule, answer questions and record testimony. *(See side bar.)*

Governor Locke's Plan

The proposed rule is part of a plan put forward by Gov. Gary Locke designed to institute a new mainstem water resources management program for the Columbia River. The proposal establishes a framework for issuing new water rights from the Columbia River, while simultaneously improving stream flows for fish populations. Gov. Locke's plan includes:

- A policy bill for lawmakers to consider during the 2005 legislative session.
- A capital budget investment program to acquire water rights, improve conservation practices, and develop new water storage capacity.
- An operating budget request to administer the program.
- Cooperative agreements with federal and local partners to obtain water.
- Draft rule language to implement the program.

Ecology will not adopt the proposed rule prior to receiving direction from the next governor and the legislature.

Background

There are approximately 300 pending applications in Washington for new water rights from the Columbia River, and the demand for water is expected to grow as population and economic activities increase. At the same time, a report by the National Academy of Sciences advised Ecology to give careful consideration to the effects new water withdrawals would have on critical fish populations living in the river. In addition, a University of Washington economics study commissioned by Ecology predicted new water withdrawals could result in substantial economic growth for the region.

The proposed program

The purpose of Columbia River Mainstem Water Management Program (Program) is to develop a framework for the Columbia River that:

- Meets the water-supply needs of growing communities and local economies by providing a timely, affordable and reliable supply of water from the Columbia River mainstem.
- Manages water in a manner that reduces risks to important fish populations and maintains healthy watersheds by securing and dedicating water to improve stream flows in the Columbia River mainstem.



Proposed legislation provides direction to Ecology regarding the key elements of the program, including:

- Acquiring water prior to approving new withdrawals: Two-thirds of the secured water would be placed in a reserve or “Water Account” and earmarked for new uses, while the remaining third would be permanently retained by the state to improve stream flows for fish.
- Authorizing new uses of water from the Columbia River mainstem and improving the reliability of water rights issued by Ecology between 1980 and 2003 that are subject to being limited or curtailed when the river drops below established instream flows.

The proposed rule

The proposed rule would establish:

- Guidelines for managing the Columbia River Mainstem Water Management Account (Water Account).
- An Administrator for the Water Account and set priorities for allocation of water from the Water Account.
- Requirements and procedures for issuing water rights during declared droughts to augment existing interruptible rights on the Columbia River mainstem which could be curtailed when flows drop too low.
- Requirements and procedures to secure a reliable supply of water for water rights issued on the Columbia River mainstem in 2003 as well as for pre-moratorium applications for new water rights from the Columbia River mainstem pending since 1991.
- Requirements and procedures for issuing new surface and underground or “ground water” rights from the Columbia River mainstem for applications on file with Ecology since 1992, and for any future water-right applications received by the department.

For more information

For information on the hearings or contact information, see the sidebar on page 1.

All information is available online:

The draft rule, preliminary Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), Small Business Economic Impact Statement (SBEIS), and the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are available on Ecology’s website at: www.ecy.wa.gov. Click on **Quick Links** (index bar on the left of the web page) and go to **Columbia R. Initiative**. You can also **submit comments** on the draft rule and draft EIS from the Columbia River Initiative web site.

To obtain a paper copy of the draft rule, contact: Christine Corrigan, Dept. of Ecology
PO Box 47600
Olympia WA 98504 (360) 407-6607

To obtain a paper copy of the draft EIS, preliminary CBA, or SBEIS:

- Call Ecology's Publication Distribution Office at (360) 407-7472.
- E-mail your request to: ecypub@ecy.wa.gov
- Mail your request to: Dept. of Ecology Publications Office
Attn: Jean Witt, PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600

If you require this publication in alternate format, please contact the Water Resources Program at (360) 407-6600 or TTY (for the speech or hearing impaired) at 711 or 800-833-6388.